stalls and travel agencies etc. on railway stations in view of the growing unemployment in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) State-wise number of beneficiaries during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) and (b) Detailed guidelines for allotment of STD/ISD/PCO/FAX/Internet Booths at Railway stations covering various categories of persons such as Educated Unemployed Youths, Physically Handicapped and Ladies have been issued. Policy guidelines have also been issued for allotment of Bookstalls to educated unemployed youths and for allotment of catering stalls to physically handicapped and war widows. For granting licence to Rail Travellers' Service Agents and Rail Tourist Agents, no priority is accorded to educated unemployed youths.

(c) No such statistics are maintained.

Justification of new projects of Railways

1455. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in terms of Rules 201 and 204 of Railway Financial Code (Vol. No. I) is it necessary that a new project should be financially justified and that the rate of return (RCR) should not be less than 10% of the estimated cost of the project;

(b) if so, why the Railway Board sanctioned the gauge conversion work on Yelahanka-Chikballapur-Bangarpet section which resulted in an infructuous expenditure of more than Rs. 60.00 crores after the project was abandoned midway as commercially unviable; and

(c) what are the reasons for the railways not providing funds for bonifide and commercially viable projects like Hassan-Mangalore broad gauge conversion for the last 10 years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) The projects on Indian Railways,

chargeable to Capital, are generally sanctioned on financial consideration, where the rate of return should not be less than 10% (since revised to 14%). However, at the same time, in case of major projects, Indian Railways Finance code also provides that, *inter-alia,* costs and benefits likely to be realized by the economy as a whole should be kept in mind as Railways are considered an important instrument of economic and industrial development.

(b) The work of gauge conversion of Yelahanka-Chikballapur and Kolar-Bangarpet section had been taken up under Project Unigauge and had since been commissioned.

(c) Gauge conversion of Arsikere-Hassan-Mangalore MG is being progressed in Phases and funds are being provided commensurate with the works planned. Work on Arsikere-Hassan-Sakleshpur section of the project has been completed and commissioned. Work on Mangalore-Kabakaputtur is nearing completion. It is targeted to complete the section upto Subramanya Road from Mangalore end during 2003-04. The work on ghat section between Subramanya Road and Sakleshpur is also in progress and is expected to be completed during 2004-05 subject to availability of resources. This is one of the projects being implemented through KRIDE.

Bidar-Gulbarga railway line

1456. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the estimated cost of the proposed Bidar-Gulbarga railway line;

(b) when the foundation stone for the above project was laid;

(c) the amount allocated for the above project in the Budget of 2003-2004;

(d) whether survey work has been initiated;

(e) if so, by when, the survey work would be completed;

(f) what is the extent of land required to be acquired; and

(g) whether the land acquisition process has started?